

State of Alaska
Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing

Alaska State Board of Social Work Examiners
February 2, 2021

Written meeting minutes only reflects a brief overview of the business conducted during the boards meeting. For a more detailed account, please request a copy of the meeting recording.

By Authority of AS 08.01.070(2) and in compliance with the provisions of AS 44.62, a regularly scheduled meeting of the Alaska State Board of Social Work Examiners was held February 2, 2021 via Zoom.

February 2, 2021

Agenda item #1 Call to Order/Roll Call

This meeting was called to order by Chairperson Mindy Swisher at 9:01am.

Board Members present, constituting a quorum:

Mindy Swisher, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Board Chairperson
Brandon Ercanbrack, Licensed Clinical Social Worker
Geoffry McCormick, Licensed Master Social Worker

Board Members absent:

Colleen Vague, Public Member

Division Staff present:

Lacey Derr, Records and Licensing Supervisor
Lyda Rees, Occupational Licensing Examiner

Agenda Item #2 Review Agenda

A motion duly made by Geoffry McCormick, seconded by Brandon Ercanbrack, and approved by unanimous consent, was:

Resolved to approve the agenda as presented.

Agenda item #3 Ethics Reporting

The board was asked about any ethics disclosures needing to be reported and there were none.

Agenda item #4 Investigative Report

Josh Hardy joined the meeting at 9:05am. Marilyn Zimmerman joined the meeting at 9:08am

Mr. Hardy informed the board that there were twelve (12) matters opened and five (5) matters closed during the period from September 17, 2020 through January 25, 2021.

A motion duly made by Brandon Ercanbrack, seconded by Geoffry McCormick, and approved by unanimous consent, was:

Resolved to enter Executive Session at 9:10am in accordance with AS 44.62.310(c), and Alaska Constitutional Right to Privacy Provisions, for the purpose of discussing matters which by laws, municipal charter, or ordinance are required to be confidential. Board staff to remain present: Lacey Derr, Lyda Rees, Josh Hardy, and Marilyn Zimmerman.

Back on the record at 9:17am.

A motion duly made by Geoffrey McCormick, seconded by Brandon Ercanbrack, and approved by unanimous consent, was:

Resolved to accept order of default on suspension of license, case #2019-000522

Josh Hardy and Marilyn Zimmerman exited the meeting at 9:18am

Agenda item #5 Emergency Courtesy License Regulations

Jun Maiquis joined the meeting at 9:27am.

RLS Derr presented the information provided by the regulations team. There were no public comments received in regard to the Emergency Courtesy License (ECL) Regulations. The board asked whether or not there was an increase in ECL applications and how long the current emergency declaration regulation is to last. It was agreed the Emergency Courtesy License Regulation is working as intended and was a great accomplishment for the social work licensing base.

A motion duly made by Brandon Ercanbrack, seconded by Geoffrey McCormick, and approved by unanimous consent, was:

Resolved to, adopt 12 AAC 18.111 – Emergency Courtesy License as presented and make permanent.

Jun Maiquis exited the meeting at 9:32am.

With more time before the legislative discussion, the board began to discuss Agenda item #7, Application Review. All discussion notes are listed under Agenda item #7.

The board took a recess for break at 9:50am.

The board returns from recess and is back on record at 10:03am.

Agenda item #6 Legislative Discussion – Social Work Practice Under Supervision

Jason Floyd with Representative Gillham's office and Glenn Hoskinson joined the meeting at 10:03am.

Jason Floyd stated that Representative Ron Gillham is concerned about the high number of complaints that have been received by the State Ombudsman's office concerning the Office of Children's Services (OCS).

They are currently posing HB193 to the board. HB193 would create a pathway for less traditional students to gain pathway into the position so that they are able to come under this board's regulation so that they can address the public safety issues and the problems that exist. This will incentivize OCS workers and let them know that there is a pathway to bettering themselves, and to provide opportunities to get better pay and better recognition for what they are doing and to get them back on the CE track. Currently they do not have to do any Continuing Education.

Rural Human Services certificate program at UAF is a good example of a non-traditional pathway to professional licensure.

Mr. Floyd is asking the board to consider taking a serious look at the ASWB's provision of the Associate's level licensure. Some states actively use this. When he spoke with ASWB they said they would be more than happy to help our state navigate this and set it up for our state. He is setting up meetings with OCS as well. Main point – let's get more people under licensure process, trained, and able to enter the profession.

One of the things his office is going to be doing will be working with legislative legal to see how the statute can be rewritten to address that specific regulation and provide more direction towards more partnership with academic institutions and the services they provide.

He has received confirmation from Dept of H&SS that there has been a downward slide for those able to be licensed or considered to be coming from the profession of social work. Rep. Gillham is passionate about this, so is Mr. Floyd. If there is anything the board can think of statutorily, that would be helpful as they look at meeting the demand and pulling more people under the authority of the board.

Mindy posed the question: has he looked under the qualifications that it takes to fulfill a job as a protective services specialist? Her experience is that it has changed over time, the type of people applying for the position has changed.

Mr. Floyd responded that the department is under executive order to have OCS split out from the larger body. He has been told this is the opportune time to look at innovation, updating job descriptions and how they approach recruiting qualified folks and getting them trained up and retaining them. They will not be given the opportunity again for awhile. He has not read the new descriptions but did two years ago. At the time it struck him that the board could be doing more to encourage people. That is the key: how do we incentivize to have people pull themselves up. He does not want to muck things up, does not want to make board's job harder, nor OCS's, just want to streamline things and have all parties talking to each other who have not talked in awhile or may have never talked. They are working on other things to provide OCS support and easing up their caseloads.

He had a conversation with founder of RHS yesterday to explore career ladders that are being contacted. If the board has additional contacts, that is important for him to have. When he puts together legislation and it's presented, there will be an opportunity for public testimony and it will be important to hear the stake holders' perspective and have those considerations already made before the bill hits the floor. They do not want to make something that will muck things up. The board knows best, and he's asking them to say if they were king for a day and they would have it their way what would it be. He has a ream of paper that he has printed off regarding all universities and technical colleges that offer associate degree work. If after the meeting the board or staff could send him a quick summary on what action if any has been decided; if they would like to actively submit language or if the board would like to craft language, he is more than happy to incorporate that. He wants to know if the board thinks there is a way it definitely needs to be or should be done. Absent that, he will go through legislative legal and will start creating it himself. He is available to come back if they would like to have another meeting during Session.

Board discussion:

From what Geoffry is gathering he would like to put all OCS employees under the board's umbrella. Lots of different ideas were incorporated. He mentioned that he will be having legislators make a change in the regulations on how they accept CEUs to include CEUs from accredited colleges. New job orientation is currently not accepted, and that seems to be the main thing he wanted to change. Brandon noted that is was put in regulation because it's not easy to regulate every agency and their orientation. Training at OCS is in the hundreds of hours, that would limit people getting all of the additional training they would need to get per regulations. There could be a cap of the amount of CEs approved during orientation. Could be up to 200 hours for OCS training specifically. Is this a way to hold OCS workers accountable so that if there is a complaint it would go through the investigations process? RSL Derr noted that the regulations state "hours spent in job orientation may not be accepted as CE contact hours". Question to the board – is there a difference between the orientation and the training?

If they are wanting to add additional license type, the board would be responsible for investigation costs and application costs. Does the board want more information on what he is wanting from the board? The board agreed additional information would be needed.

Geoffry states that the board cannot put a title on someone just because the board thinks they need it. They need to make sure they are regulating it better for the public. More clarity is needed on what exactly they want to have completed. ASWB has an Associate's level exam. If they are stating that someone with an associate degree in Human Services should be able to take the test, the board would be interested in this. However, if someone has an associate degree in mechanics and they then decide to work for OCS, that does not seem like a good idea as they would not have the correct education. Not every degree should be under the umbrella for social work.

Mindy states that OCS is looking at people with competencies rather than degrees currently. She believes Mr. Floyd should review the job requirements to get a better understanding of this. People with Social Work degrees are not applying. The current trend is that fairly younger paraprofessionals are applying. She does not know if they would be on track to get an associate degree. Perhaps this would help them as an incentive. However, there is not an incentive currently to get licensed or get a degree because there is no pay increase with OCS. If they changed the regulations, this would not just be for OCS. This would be looking at the whole community.

Geoffry noted that the board reviews and approves Continuing Education courses for CEU approval. If the agency has orientations and training that are important for Social Work, they would be able to submit a request for the CEUs to be approved.

Brandon states that a cap would be good for orientation CEUs, assuming it has relevance to Human Services and Social Work. It is often up to an employer to decide if they would like to have people be licensed or not.

Overall the board agreed that this brought up a good discussion. They would like the language of what is being proposed so they are able to review this and understand the presentation more thoroughly.

RLS Derr will get additional documentation for the board to see what is being presented and changed. At next board meeting she will have the board's questions figured out and will explain those and provide clarity on the record.

Agenda item #7 Application Review

The board and the Records and Licensing Supervisor discussed the most efficient way to review the backlog of applications that has occurred due to staff shortages. The board agreed on reviewing a maximum of 15 applications every two weeks.

Discussion was had regarding the difference between voting 'table' and 'approved pending' after reviewing an application.

- Table: requires the board to re-review the application once the additional information requested is received from the applicant.
- Approved pending: allows the examiner to approve the application once the requested information is received. Does not require a second review from the board. 'Should be used for something simple/relatively easy to fix that does not need a professional eye to confirm.'
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Agenda item #8 Public Comment

Public comment period opened at 11:30am.

Tonie Protzman joined the meeting for public comment at 11:37am.

Tonie Protzman is the Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers in Alaska. She is calling to voice concern that members of the association are not getting phone calls received or returned.. This is Ms. Protzman's second time testifying in front of the board. With the workforce shortage Social Workers have in the state and the concerns with mental health issues, she is trying to help the state with the issues happening at the local level. Applicants need to have their questions answered so they are able to get licensed. She respectfully asks that the issue be resolved again.

RLS Derr responded that the Board of Social Work Examiners is extremely short staffed. The Division is implementing putting more notices in public places to let licensees know that they are trying to help as much as possible. The hope is that the license base sees positive improvement in communication over the next few weeks.

Agenda item #9 **Lunch**

*The board took a recess for lunch at 11:50am.
The board returns from recess and is back on record at 12:59pm.*

Agenda item #10 **Division Update**

Melissa Dumas joined the meeting at 12:59pm.

Melissa presented the FY2021 second quarter board report. After the fee analysis, they are proposing no changes to the fees.

Brandon inquired as to why the investigations fees have increased this fiscal year. Melissa advised the board to reach out to Investigations for more information about this. Lacey stated that without official input from Investigations, it is estimated that these fees are due to license actions and voluntary surrenders that occurred during the fiscal year.

Agenda item #11 **New/Administrative Business**

Set Upcoming Meetings

-No March meeting on HB193 at this point. Currently unclear if HB193 is to be put on the floor during this session or next. Lacey will get clarification to see if there is a need for a March meeting.

-The next board meeting will involve the audit review. The board is requesting this board meeting take place in-person in Anchorage as the majority of the board have not yet reviewed audits. Tentative date: April 12-13, 2021.

ASWB Trainings/ Conferences

Board members are to email RLS Derr with their interest in the ASWB 2021 Education Meeting taking place April 29-May 1, 2021. The board is encouraged to ask to attend any virtual trainings they are interested in. As long as board finances can support it, more than one board member may attend a virtual training.

Agenda item #12 **Old Business**

It was determined on the record that the Public Member's absence is unexcused.

Emergency Courtesy License Numbers

Applicants are still applying for Emergency Courtesy Licenses. Many who have already obtained an ECL are now applying for permanent licensure. RLS Derr posed the following question to the board: would they like to extend the application expiration out another 90 days to allow applicants to apply for full licensure?

A motion duly made by Geoffrey McCormick, seconded by Brandon Ercanbrack, and approved by unanimous consent, was:

Resolved to extend the Emergency Courtesy License for an additional 90 days after March 4, 2021.*

*During the motion it was resolved to extend the ECL for an additional 120 days. Per statute **12 AAC 18.111(c)**: An emergency courtesy license issued under this section is valid for the period specified by the board and may not exceed 90 consecutive days. An emergency courtesy license may be renewed for one additional period specified by the board, **not to exceed 90 consecutive days**.

Review/Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

A motion duly made by Geoffry McCormick, seconded by Brandon Ercanbrack, and approved by unanimous consent, was:

Resolved to approve as amended CSW Emergency Meeting April 7, 2020 draft minutes to be approved, April 14, 2020 draft minutes to be approved, April 23, 2020 draft minutes to be approved, January 27-28, 2020 draft minutes to be approved, and June 22, 2020 draft minutes to be approved with grammatical adjustments.

Task list:

- Send out audit letters
- Reach out for more information from Representative Gillham's office
- Schedule one-hour meeting on HB193 if necessary
- Send in requests for ASWB Education Meeting
- Find resolution for Public Member situation

Agenda item #13 Adjourn

A motion duly made by Geoffry McCormick, seconded by Brandon Ercanbrack, and approved by unanimous consent, was:

Resolved to adjourn at 2:06pm.

Adjourned at 2:06 PM.

Respectfully Submitted By:

DocuSigned by:

C80A28A0A555413...
Stefanie L. Davis
Occupational Licensing Examiner
State of Alaska, DCCED, CBPL

1/13/2022

Date

DocuSigned by:

9F237A2A86A2448...
Mindy Swisher
Board Chairperson
Alaska State Board of Social Work Examiners

1/11/2022

Date